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ABSTRACT

The practicum described in this report was designed to make a significant difference in increasing students' language expression by assisting teachers with the appropriate techniques to incorporate effectively the writing process in an integrated language arts curriculum. The target group consisted of 150 fourth-grade students and the 5 fourth-grade teachers. The implementation period lasted 12 weeks and involved the use of critical thinking skills, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and graphic organizers. Teachers participated in seven 2-hour training sessions designed to assist them in incorporating the writing process into the integrated language arts curriculum. The success of the practicum was based upon the target teachers' required training assignments, performance on the cognitive language arts composition posttest, and the target students' growth in language expression as measured on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and a holistic scoring writing prompt. Results indicated that: (1) the wide variance between language mechanics and language expression scores was narrowed to a one percentile discrepancy; (2) 52% of the students met the criteria for successful language expression; and (3) all of the target teachers increased their knowledge of the writing process and demonstrated effective strategies for writing instruction. (Sixteen references, the teacher survey, two expository writing prompts, the holistic scoring guide, the teacher pre- and posttest, and the agenda for the teacher training sessions are attached.) (RS)

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IMPROVING LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

by

Karen S. Finkelstein

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A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education, Nova University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

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ABSTRACT

Improving Language Arts Skills at the Elementary School Level.
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The practicum site teachers lacked sufficient training to adequately implement the writing process in the new integrated language arts curriculum. This was evidenced by a background review of the teachers' training and students' Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) results. The students' CTBS results depicted a significant discrepancy between students' language expression and language mechanics. The writer attempted to make a significant difference in increasing students' language expression by providing teacher training to assist teachers with the appropriate techniques to effectively incorporate the writing process in an integrated language arts curriculum. The target group consisted of 150 fourth grade students and the five fourth grade teachers. The practicum author continued to work with the same core group over a 12-week implementation period. The overall purpose of this project was to increase the fourth grade students' language expression and the fourth grade teachers' knowledge of the writing process. The practicum author measured the success of the project based upon the target teachers' required training assignments, performance on the cognitive language arts composition post test, and the target students' growth in language expression as measured on the CTBS and a holistic scoring writing prompt. Appendices include an end-of-the-year teacher survey, two expository writing prompts, a holistic scoring guide, and a language arts composition post test.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: Karen S. Finkelstein
Student's name

Table of Contents

	Page
Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Authorship Statement	iii
Observer's Verification	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapters	
I. Purpose	1
II. Research and Solution Strategy	13
III. Method	28
IV. Results	44
V. Recommendations	49
Reference List	51
Appendices	
Appendix A: End-Of-The-Year-Survey	54
Appendix B: Expository Writing Prompt	58
Appendix C: Expository Writing Prompt	60
Appendix D: Holistic Scoring Guide	62
Appendix E: Language Arts Composition Pre-And-Post Test	65
Appendix F: Language Arts Composition Agenda	67

CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The practicum school site is located in the central region of Florida. The philosophy of the school is to educate the whole child by encouraging individuality, creativity, and building self-esteem. The site school believes students will achieve academic and physical potential when the environment is conducive to learning. Learning is fostered when learning time is maximized, order and discipline are maintained, and parents are involved in the educational process. The staff and administration are dedicated to the following principles: Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interrelated aspects of communication and thus lend themselves toward an integrated curriculum. Current research indicates children learn best when an integrated language arts program is implemented in the learning environment. This approach is literature based with content areas being emphasized through child-centered learning and flexible instruction.

Each year the practicum site identifies goals and objectives to further the development of the school's philosophy. The goals include: (1) improving student performance through the implementation of the Effective School Research Model; (2) providing and or recommending participation in staff enhancement activities; (3) enhancing the curriculum; (4) improving and increasing student self-esteem. The objectives are comprised as follows: (1) reviewing the writing process and its implementation within an integrated language arts curriculum; (2) establishing a specific area and maintaining a writing production lab to produce and publish student work; (3) utilizing whole-language instructional techniques in the implementation of the Houghton Mifflin Literacy Reading Program; (4) meeting or exceeding the district mean or percentile on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS); (5) increasing teacher effectiveness in the management of cooperative learning groups; (6) implementing the Positive Action program; (7) increasing teacher use of word processing with students; (8) restructuring programs to better meet individual student needs; (9) developing thematic boxes of materials for use in the classroom.

In 1971, a central Florida school district opened three schools simultaneously. They were an elementary school, middle school, and high school. The schools were within one city block of each other and were completely surrounded by orange groves. The practicum site, an elementary school, opened with 600 kindergarten through fifth grade students. Approximately three years later, the practicum site population grew to 1,400 and scheduled double sessions while awaiting the completion of a new elementary school. The student body population consisted primarily of families from a low socio-economic background. Among the teachers employed was the daughter of a prominent local real estate developer. This developer played a major role in contributing money to the school and inspired other community developers to participate in monetary contributions towards the school. The results of their generosity was a school built on tremendous pride and community relationships.

The practicum site is no longer surrounded by orange groves, but located in a middle class suburb outside of a central Florida metropolitan city. The population served includes 966 students in grades

kindergarten through five. An additional 40 students are instructed in the Early Intervention Pre-Kindergarten and Headstart Programs. Special education classes are provided by two self-contained emotionally handicapped units, one specific learning disabilities classroom, an alternative education classroom serving fourth and fifth grade students, and gifted and speech resource rooms.

The building has always been a pod facility. Three years ago the campus was enlarged to include four additional wings. This addition contains self-contained classrooms housing kindergarten and special education classes, art and music rooms, and a cafeteria. The main building remains a pod facility. Recently the principal installed several portable walls at each grade level. These walls are used to divide the pods into individual self-contained classrooms reducing visual and aural distractions. These classrooms are utilized by five kindergartens, six first grades, six second grades, five third grades, six fourth grades, and five fifth grades.

The instructional staff consists of 33 classroom teachers, 16 support and special program teachers, and 26 non-instructional staff members. The average teacher/pupil ratio is 1:27.5. The student body is

grouped heterogeneously for all areas of instruction. The total student population for the 1991-92 academic school year is 966. Forty-nine percent are female. This enrollment is made up of 79 percent Caucasian, 9 percent Black, 10 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian. This data will fluctuate throughout the year due to the transient student body population.

Last year the practicum cite school district adopted a new reading and language arts curriculum. Previously the instructional method used for teaching reading and language arts was the traditional approach. Subjects and skills were taught independently and instruction was segmented into blocks of time. Traditional reading series typically tell teachers what they can do and say in a teaching lesson, thus depriving teachers of the responsibility and authority to make informed professional judgments.

The new curriculum is an integrated language arts program. Instruction is literature based with content areas emphasized through child-centered learning and flexible instruction. Writing is a major component of the curriculum and writing projects are based on the writing process. "Reading and writing are not separate

in a child's learning, nor do they develop sequentially. Instead, the two processes are mutually supportive and are intimately related to oral language" (Sulzby, 1985).

The current administration embraced this new instructional program eagerly. After reviewing the background training of the present faculty employed and conducting a survey, these instructional leaders realized the staff lacked sufficient knowledge to adequately implement the program. The administration approached the author of this practicum to assist in the solution of this problem.

The author of the the practicum project has had 14 years of teaching experience. The first four years were teaching second grade in a suburban school in St. Louis, Missouri. The next eight years of experience were spent teaching second grade at an elementary school in the same district as the practicum site. Currently, the writer of the practicum is the elementary curriculum specialist (ECS) at the practicum site. Some of the duties of the ECS include: coordinator of the Primary Education Program (PREP) and Progress In Middle Childhood Education (PRIME) program, chairperson of the language arts committee, member of the Student Study

Team and Student Assistance Team, organizer of small group activities for all students requiring additional challenges or remediation, providing additional curriculum resources and learning materials for classroom teachers, planning interventions for students as part of the PREP and PRIME Programs and for the referral process for the exceptional student education program, screening students to help identify academic placement, and conducting various staff development for the faculty.

The target group for this practicum was the fourth grade students at the site school and the fourth grade teachers.

Problem Statement

As the practicum site began the 1990-91 academic school year, the new integrated language arts program was implemented in all kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. The administration was interested in receiving feedback about the new program and disseminated to all teachers an end-of-the-year survey (Appendix A:54) pertaining to the newly adopted curriculum. These surveys, along with CTBS results, and

background reviews of teachers' training were utilized to assess the effectiveness of the new curriculum.

During March 1990, the CTBS was administered to all second and fourth grade students. The average language scores the site school's second grade students received in mechanics was at the 78 percentile compared to an average score of 64 percentile in language expression. Fourth grade students' performance in language mechanics showed an average percentile of 79 and the language expression scores of these fourth graders was an average percentile of 73. The target students for this practicum was the fourth grade students at the practicum site. The fourth grade students were selected as the target group because they will take the National Writing Assessment in 1992-93. After careful analysis of the test scores, the administration noticed the wide variance of scores between language mechanics and language expression. When a comparison was made of this year's scores to those of the previous school year, where grades one through five were given the CTBS, a similar difference appears. In first grade the site school performed at the 96 percentile in language mechanics and 95 percentile in expression. Second grade students achieved at the 90

percentile in language mechanics and at the 81 percentile in language expression. Fourth graders continued to show a discrepancy producing an average percentile of 94 in mechanics and 82 in expression. Although the variance between language mechanics and language expression scores was not as great for fifth grade students, they generated an average percentile of 83 in mechanics and 80 in expression.

In an attempt to explain the discrepancy between the level of achievement students were experiencing in language mechanics and language expression, feedback from teachers was reviewed. The end-of-the-year teachers' survey (Appendix A:54) responses reported the following findings: 60 percent of teachers were disappointed with students' reading comprehension; 79 percent were insecure in using portfolios as assessment; 48 percent taught spelling in isolation; 39 percent taught writing for contest purposes; and 82 percent taught writing in isolation.

After reviewing feedback from the end-of-the-year (Appendix A:54) survey, the background training and teaching experience of the current faculty were reviewed. The administration learned only 12 of the 33

teachers had received training in the writing process and its integration within a whole language curriculum. It is apparent that the teachers' lack of training and understanding about an integrated language arts program contributed toward the problem of the students not achieving their potential in language expression. Graves states (1983:5-6):

> The teaching of writing demands the control of two crafts, teaching and writing. They can neither be avoided nor separated. The writer who knows the craft of writing can't walk into a room and work with students unless there is some understanding of the craft of teaching. Neither can teachers who have not wrestled with writing, effectively teach the writer's craft.

This practicum developed a program for teachers that increased the target students' language expression by 13 percent, eliminating the discrepancy that existed between percentile achievement levels in language mechanics and language expression.

Outcome Objectives

The outcome objectives for this practicum over a twelve week implementation period were:

1. Through the use of the critical thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and graphic organizers

the target students should achieve a mean score with the same percentile in language mechanics as in language expression. In order to measure this results, a comparison was made between the target students' performance on the CTBS in the spring of 1989 and the CTBS/4 in 1992.

2. Through the use of the critical thinking skills, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and graphic organizers, the target students should increase their language expression. This objective was measured by a comparison of two holistic scoring expository writing prompts (Appendices B:58 and C:60) similar to those developed by the Florida Department of Education. The criteria for successful language expression was a holistic score of three or above on the writing prompt (Appendix D:62).

3. One hundred percent of the fourth grade teachers should increase their knowledge of implementing the writing process through an integrated curriculum by 90 percent in order to demonstrate effective instruction of writing strategies. This objective was measured by a comparison of the target teachers' responses on a pre-and-post author constructed test (Appendix E:65). The criteria that was used to determine the target

teachers' successful completion of five writing assignments was class projects applying all five of the writing steps in the integration of the curriculum.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Children come to school with a desire to write. Before they went to school they wrote with anything that makes a mark – chalk, pens or pencils, and crayons. They marked up walls, papers, pavements, and newspapers. Graves states (1983:3), "The child's marks say, 'I am.'" Educators ignore children's desires to show what they know because they do not understand the writing process and children's natural urges to write. Instead, teachers believe children do not want to write and cannot be motivated to write. Teachers relate painful memories of their school and university writing experiences and do not want their students to endure similar unpleasantness. Teaching writing effectively is no different than teaching any other subject. In order for the children to become independent learners, the teacher has to know the subject, the process, and the children (Graves, 1983).

In the past, when teachers encouraged children's writing at the kindergarten level, the focus was not on

literacy, but on reading as a prerequisite. When writing was ultimately introduced in the primary grades, teachers emphasized copying words and sentences. The elementary classroom teachers' focus was on correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, neatness, and handwriting. According to Routman (1988), children can read and write when they leave school, but are unable to read and write in other contexts. Research has revealed when children are given opportunities to explore with writing materials, they will emerge as literate. Children will attempt written expression even if they possess limited reading ability (Strickland, 1989). Unfortunately, the techniques used to teach students language at school do not correlate with the natural learning of language at home. Teachers have compartmentalized learning through the use of skill packets and skill based learning on fragmented materials unrelated to the child's real experiences. Teachers often have a preconceived idea of a student's response and will accept only the short answer supplied by the teacher's manual. The child's answer receives recognition only if the response given agrees with the teacher's preconceived answer of the one supplied by the

teacher's guide (Routman, 1988).

All children enter school with oral and written language experiences. The school's reading and writing activities should build on the child's background of experiences. "Children need to use language purposefully, meaningfully, and naturally—in whole units, not in small pieces or for teaching skills in a hierarchy" (Routman, 1988:18).

An understanding of the appropriate classroom environment for language development will help teachers become experts at their craft of teaching. Newman (1990) outlines some key principles for writing instruction. Teachers must learn to create an environment that stimulates language and provides opportunities for reading and writing. As instructors they must recognize development occurring in many directions at the same time. Students must be given the opportunity to experiment and take risks in the process of learning to write. Every time teachers decide on writing topics, expect accurate spelling and punctuation, or correct a student's mistakes, they take away a student's chance for experimenting with the writing process. It is important for teachers to support children's

experimentation and to learn to look for the conventions of writing as they appear in their students' writing. Students must discover their own strategies for successful language usage. Responding meaningfully to children's writing is another important feature of a classroom environment dedicated to promoting language. Teachers are more effective instructors when they demonstrate what is involved in becoming a good writer, rather than telling their students how to write.

The writing atmosphere in a classroom is set by what the teacher models, not by what the teacher says. Teachers need to share writing with their students, instead of assigning writing (Graves, 1983). When Heymsfeld (1990) modeled writing a story to fourth grade students the process of creating a story was demonstrated. Students observed how the teacher's words flowed from words to pen. The children watched the teacher put ideas down quickly, without being interrupted with critical editing. Their teacher demonstrated the process of stepping back and reading the content. During the revising and editing process, the students did not remain passive observers. They assisted the teacher with the necessary changes and

became active participants in the writing lesson. Using student's recommendations to edit gave the teacher the opportunity to express appreciation for the suggestions, and explain all final changes were the teacher's—not because Heymsfeld was the teacher, but because Heymsfeld was the author. Heymsfeld states to students (1990:55), "When you're the authors, you'll decide which changes, if any, you want to make. Authors own what they write."

The students in this fourth grade classroom saw an author write an imperfect story that required revision. This helps give them permission to write crude stories in order to get their creative juices flowing. Students witnessed their teacher coming out from behind the desk and developing as a writer. The teacher and students became a working team with no judges and no critics—emerging as fellow authors helping each other become better writers (Heymsfeld, 1990). The purpose of composing before children is to help children witness how words go down on paper and the thoughts that go with the decisions made in the writing (Graves, 1983).

Modeling a writing lesson for students gives teachers the opportunity to understand their own writing. They also gain a better understanding of what

to observe in their students, after modeling various elements of the writing process. The writing process is discovered by doing it. Graves defines the "Process" as "...everything a person does from the time he first contemplates the topic to the final moment when he completes the paper (1983:250)." Students can learn the components of the process through the lecture. However, they will not understand the process until they actually do the writing and make the words fulfill their intentions (Graves, 1983).

As the teacher composes before students, the students need to hear the teacher speak aloud about the thinking that accompanies the process: topic choice, how to start the piece, deleting, and looking for a better word. Children will then choose those elements from the teacher's writing that are relevant to their own writing. This keeps the writing experience positive and the teacher avoids making statements such as, "Now this is the way I write, you write this way" (Graves, 1983:44).

When writing is taught as a process, the teacher concentrates on the following five steps: (1) prewriting, (2) writing a first draft, (3) revising, (4)

proofreading, and (5) making a final copy to share. The students are in charge of their writing in comparison to the traditional approach to teaching writing. Previously the teacher selected the writer's topic, specified the criteria for success, served as the writer's audience, editor, proofreader, and evaluator. Students were asked to deal successfully with content, organization, sentence structure, stylistic devices, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and usage, handwriting, and format all at once. The process approach encourages independent thought, cooperation, responsibility, striving for excellence, and pride in achievement (Millett, 1990). Millett states (1990:13-14):

> Because writing requires thinking, writing improves learning... The mental activities and thinking skills required at each step in the writing process apply to learning in all language-centered subjects: In prewriting, students identify, recall, select, define, and explore. In drafting, they classify, select, order, and focus. In revision, students analyze content, synthesize choices, forge them into a coherent whole, and evaluate their effectiveness. In proofreading, they identify errors and correct them by applying what they know or by seeking, acquiring, and applying new information.

These aspects of the writing process correlate with Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.

During the five stages of the writing process, students learn to apply all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Graphic organizers such as webs, semantic maps, inverted triangles, charts, and Venn Diagrams, help students choose and explore their topics, collect information, organize material, and establish relationships between ideas (Millett, 1990). According to Bloom, as cited by Foley and Bagley (1988:7), "... the major purpose for constructing the taxonomy of educational objectives was to facilitate communication."

Basic skills are also an integral part of the writing process. They are incorporated at the revision and proofreading stages. Students are more receptive to grammar and mechanics instruction because they know they are held responsible for identifying as many of their own errors as possible during a writing assignment. This provides students with the evidence and motivation to pay attention to grammar and mechanics instructions. Teachers of grades kindergarten through eight and above agree that when skills are taught with a purpose and through the writing process, skills improve. Turbill, as

cited by Millett (1990:13) summarizing the experiences of 27 teachers in three primary schools after one year of teaching writing as a process, points out other "beneficial by-products" of this approach. This includes punctuation and handwriting improvement. Invented spelling, which is currently being used, removes students' fear. Sentences are more flexible and there is an increase in vocabulary usage.

American educators are learning about literacy instruction from Australia and New Zealand where the literacy rates are among the highest in the world. Primary school students from New Zealand's primary school have the highest literacy rate in the world. The United States has one of the lowest rates for an industrialized country. The whole language movement has contributed to a change in American educators' philosophy of language instruction (Manning and Manning, 1990).

For more than 100 years, American public schools have believed in the theory that children need to learn the component parts of complex material before understanding the entire subject. Within this traditional curriculum teachers and textbooks have

provided the information to students. The students spend most of their time as docile recipients studying structured textbooks filled with drill and practice exercises that do not relate to the world outside the classroom. Emphasis is on the memorization of facts rather than problem solving and creative thinking (Gursky, 1991).

The traditional classroom equates learning to hard work. Learning is achieved only when students are persuaded to stay with learning. External rewards and punishment are used to provide the motivation and incentives for students to achieve learning. Although this theory has proven to survive, advocates of the whole language movement believe the traditional school does not encourage learning, but in fact, obstructs students' natural desire to knowledge (Gursky, 1991).

Teachers, administrators, and scholars who have become part of the whole language movement believe students come to school with an eagerness to learn and view learning not as work, but as a continuous process requiring little effort. The whole language movement allows students to learn by developing theories about the world around them and then testing these theories.

Scholars conclude students have an enormous amount of knowledge without the benefit of formal schooling. Gursky states (1991:23), "The average first grader, experts say, has already acquired a vocabulary of 10,000 words and assimilated many of the rules of grammar without trying."

Whole language is an entire philosophy about teaching, learning, and the role of language in the classroom. Emphasis is placed on keeping language whole and natural and providing opportunities for children to use language through experiences relating to their own lives and cultures. Whole language teaching uses journal writing, silent and oral reading of real literature, and student cooperation as common teaching techniques. The classroom environment is child-centered and students enjoy learning because the material has relevance to their own lives (Gursky, 1991). The whole language movement reflects developmental theory and research. This philosophy sees children as language learners and classrooms as communities of learners. The teacher's primary focus is to generate meaning. In the whole language classroom, children are given different opportunities to use language to understand the world

and written language. As students interact with texts, the texts should reinforce the concept that reading and writing are processes of constructing meaning (Moss, 1990). According to Manning and Manning (1990:47), whole language educators in America and New Zealand share the following theories about literacy:

> (1) literacy begins at home, long before formal schooling; (2) children construct their own knowledge about reading and writing and in so doing go through many levels of being "wrong"; (3) writing and reading are interrelated; (4) children's literature must be the heart of the reading program and those materials should be interesting and well written; (5) children must be allowed to select their books for reading and their topics for writing; and (6) teachers should be model readers and writers.

Solution Strategy

The solution strategy the author of this practicum selected to improve the target students' language expression focused on providing writing process training to the teachers employed at the practicum site and encouraged the implementation of this process in an integrated language arts curriculum.

Through the writing process training the practicum author demonstrated and exposed the target teachers to the necessary techniques to effectively incorporate the

writing process in an integrated curriculum. On several occasions the practicum author was invited to the target teachers' classrooms to model a writing lesson for fourth grade students. This gave the practicum author an opportunity to demonstrate the innovation with the target teachers and also illustrated the credibility of the writing process. According to Vickery (1988), the Johnson City New York School District operates a mastery model staff development plan. Their procedure for career development is built on the philosophy that a staff member as a learner must master the facts about a new innovation before applying the new methods. Vickery states (1988:55), "As a teacher of teachers, he or she must first know the theory underlying the practice. Next comes modeling the practice for others." Although there are teachers who change their programs as a result of reading journal articles and attending workshops, classes, and conferences, Johnson and Wilder cite Joyce and Showers (1992:626-627) stating:

> ...only five percent of this type of professional development is ever implemented in classrooms. Joyce and Showers also found that the implementation rate can rise to 95 percent when teachers are given the opportunity to see the new practices demonstrated in their classrooms, have

> opportunities to try the practices themselves with feedback from a trusted colleague, and have time to experiment with the new practice in order to fit into their schema as teachers.

As teachers gained an understanding of the appropriate classroom environment for language development and became experts at their craft of teaching (Graves, 1983), their students were given different opportunities to use language to understand the world and written language. Teachers learned methods to generate meaning as students interacted with texts and literature. As the teachers and students developed their writing, the concept that reading and writing are processes of constructing meaning was reinforced (Moss, 1990).

The training included a series of activities that was incorporated into the teacher's daily curriculum. The target teachers were given the opportunity to invite the practicum author to their classroom and model a process writing lesson for their students. These activities assisted the teacher to effectively model an appropriate writing atmosphere in the classroom (Graves, 1983).

As Graves (1983) points out, the writing atmosphere is set by what the teacher models, not by what the teacher says. The teacher does not have to be an expert writer to compose with students. Graves believes there is an advantage to learning together as both teacher and student seek to find meaning in writing.

CHAPTER III

Method

Research findings indicate that in order for teachers to effectively teach writing, they must have experience with writing as well as teaching. Teachers who have not attempted writing themselves will have difficulty implementing a successful writing program in their classrooms (Graves, 1983).

The practicum author developed seven, two-hour training sessions for teachers at the practicum site. The training introduced the target teachers to the appropriate process writing techniques and assisted them in incorporating these methods into an integrated language arts curriculum. Teachers also learned to evaluate students' writing using three styles of holistic scoring writing prompts (expository, narrative, and persuasive).

A pretest (Appendix E:65) was administered at the first training session. An agenda was then distributed (Appendix F:67) outlining the program objectives and

required assignments for in-service credit. One participant received a literature book as a door prize at the conclusion of each training session.

During the first week of the implementation period, the practicum author prepared for the two-hour training session conducted during this week. The first lesson of the training session began by creating an environment that stimulates language and provides for reading and writing. Through the use of children's literature, the target teachers were introduced to various styles of patterned literature and gained knowledge of predictability. These patterns included: repetitive, cumulative, rhyme-rhythm, chronological, interlocking, and circular patterns.

Following this experience, the writer modeled composing a class patterned book incorporating the five steps of the writing process and involving the participants. A book-binding demonstration using contact paper, cardboard, drawing paper, and staples concluded the activities for this session. The session closed with a target teacher receiving a literature book as a door prize.

The second week of the implementation period gave the target teachers an opportunity to experience writing and grasp an understanding of their own writing by completing the required assignment. They modeled the writing process by composing a class patterned book with the target students. The target students published this book as the fifth component in the writing process. The practicum author was invited to assist the target teachers with their class books during the revising stage. This is the third component of the writing process and requires synthesizing information, a critical thinking skill. The practicum author modeled this phase with the target teachers and students.

The second training session was conducted during the third week of the implementation period. The target teachers shared their class published books and this lesson began their first sharing experience. Initially, many participants were reluctant to share their class work and demonstrated a concern for approval of their published piece. This experience enabled the target teachers to empathize with their students and gain an understanding of ownership and sense of audience. The sharing of these published books by the target teachers

was used to evaluate the target teachers' demonstration of the five steps of the writing process (objective three).

The remainder of the lesson focused on composing a narrative story with the target teachers participating as the writer facilitated. The practicum author began the writing process by modeling the procedures for webbing, a critical thinking skill and the first component in the five steps of the writing process. The target teachers were also introduced to a graphic organizer, a critical thinking skill they could use to expedite the first step of the writing process. For the next assignment, the target teachers were instructed to repeat the same experience with the target students, produce the class narrative story in published format, and bring to the next training session to share. The session concluded with a target teacher receiving a literature book as a door prize.

The target teachers implemented the procedure for writing a narrative story with the target students during the fourth week. The target teachers modeled and then helped the target students with the writing and publishing of a class narrative story. The writer was

invited and assisted all of the target teachers in their classrooms, by modeling with the target students the brainstorming or prewriting stage of the writing process for the assigned class narrative story.

The third training session occurred during the fifth week and commenced with the target teachers sharing their class published narrative books. Once again, the teachers realized a sense of accomplishment, ownership, and audience as they shared their class narrative stories. This assignment was used to evaluate the target teachers' demonstration of the five steps of the writing process (objective three).

During this training session the target teachers were exposed to the following styles of poetry: nursery rhyme, limerick, concrete or shape poem, acrostic poem, Haiku, Cinquain, Diamante, and bio poem. The practicum author began the demonstration poetry lesson by distributing a Hershey's Chocolate Kiss and one of four different colored visors to each training participant. The participants then ate their treats and brainstormed words to describe the candy. The words were recorded on a transparency depicting a chocolate kiss. The training participants then separated into cooperative groups

using their colored visors. Each group contained four different colored visors. The visors represented the role each participant would assume within their group. All participants wearing the red visors were the leaders, those wearing green were the time keepers, those with yellow were the motivators, and those with blue were the recorders and responsible for supplies. The target teachers then composed poems about Hershey's Chocolate Kisses within their cooperative groups. This activity culminated sharing the group poetry with the entire audience. Teachers displayed a sense of uncertainty as they began the sharing process. However, their attitudes changed from insecurity to a sense of pride as they realized their poems were positively received by their peers.

The target teachers were instructed to duplicate a similar poetry lesson in their classrooms, publish the class poem and bring the published poem to the next training class to share for the required assignment. Originally the writer planned to demonstrate various art activities the target teachers could use in the illustrations of their final publications. Time did not permit for this activity to occur. The session concluded

with a training participant receiving a poetry anthology as a door prize.

During week six of the implementation period, the target teachers exposed the target students to various styles of poetry, and produced a published class poem to share at the next training session. The practicum author was invited to each of the target teachers' classrooms and assisted with the publishing phase of the class poems, the fifth component in the writing process.

The fourth training session was conducted during week seven of the implementation period. The target teachers began the session by sharing their class published poems. They appeared more secure and confident as they revealed the content of their class poems. This assignment was used to evaluate the target teachers' demonstration of the five steps of the writing process.

The practicum author then demonstrated various art activities the target teachers could use in the illustrations of their final publications. The target teachers were given an opportunity to experiment and participate with the following art activities. The first activity introduced teachers to marbelized paper. Using a shallow 9 x 13 inch pan filled with 1 1/2 inches of

water, the practicum author poured a few drops of three different colors of hobby paint into the pan of water. Then the paint was gently swirled with a tongue depressor to create a moving pattern floating on top of the water. When a pattern looked pleasing, a piece of drawing paper was lowered onto the water's surface just long enough to pick up the paint. The paper was lifted out of the water quickly and laid out to dry. Some suggestions for using this paper included: backgrounds for published poems, to create patterns from the designed paper for illustrations, and as the inside cover of the bookbinding.

The practicum author also demonstrated a tissue paper art activity. A variety of colored tissue paper was torn into small pieces and wrinkled. Then using two parts of Elmer's Glue to one part of water, the tissue paper was adhered to drawing paper with a paint brush in an overlapping pattern, creating a collage affect. After the tissue paper dried, the paper could be used to illustrate background pages of books or single poems, to create cut-out patterns for illustrations, or to decorate the inside cover of the bookbinding.

The final art activity the practicum author demonstrated was rubbings. The target teachers were given patterns of poster board animals to trace and cut out. These were glued on top of individual pieces of cardboard to create an embossed surface. Then a piece of drawing paper was placed over the embossed surface. Using the side of a crayon and rubbing over the drawing paper's surface, a visual image was produced on the drawing paper.

The remainder of the training session concentrated on providing the target teachers with information about journal writing, teacher/student writing conferences, portfolio assessment, and classroom organization. The target teachers were instructed to bring a target student's individual publication to the next training session for the assignment. The door prize received was a student lunch box containing a blank journal, small stuffed animal, and miniature book about the animal. The directions inside the lunch box instructed a student to take the lunch box home, read the book to the animal, and write something in the blank journal about the animal's experience at the student's house.

During the eighth week of implementation using teacher/student conferencing techniques, the target teachers acted as facilitators during the revising and proofreading stages as students completed their individual publications. The target teachers selected one student published book to share and discuss at the next training session.

The fifth training session commenced during the ninth week of implementation. The target teachers read their student publications and discussed the teacher/student conferencing methods applied during the revising and proofreading stages of the writing process. This assisted the practicum author in assessing the target teachers' demonstration of the writing process (objective three).

The remainder of the training session concentrated on expository writing and persuasive writing. The practicum author modeled expository writing using a graphic organizer, a critical thinking skill. The target teachers were introduced to examples of poor to high quality expository essays. The parameters of holistic scoring (Appendix D:62) as related to the National Writing Assessment for 1992-93 were reviewed. Persuasive

writing was then examined and a graphic organizer was introduced and discussed.

The next assignment required the target teachers to compose a class letter with the target students, persuading a famous person to visit their classroom. In addition, teachers were to compose an expository essay with the target students about a class field trip. The target teachers were then required to administer the first expository writing prompt (Appendix B:58) to the target students. The target teachers were required to save these prompts and bring them to the next training session along with the class expository essay and persuasive letter. The lesson concluded with a target teacher receiving a literature book as a door prize.

During the tenth week of implementation, the target teachers composed their persuasive letters, expository essays, and administered the expository prompts to the target students. The practicum author was available to assist the target teachers and was invited to model composing an expository essay with the target students. The practicum author also attended a lecture at the Florida Reading Association (1992) conducted by Jane Hansen, who is well known for her work with helping

students become better readers and writers. The presentation introduced new concepts about literacy portfolios and reviewed the research conducted between the Manchester, New Hampshire public schools and 12 researchers from the University of New Hampshire. This knowledge gave the author of this practicum more information to share with the target teachers.

The next training session was held during the eleventh week in lieu of the tenth week as originally planned. The teachers required an additional week to complete the essays and expository writing prompt with the target students.

Before the target teachers shared their assignments, the writer discussed the Hansen workshop. The concepts shared with the training participants included: (1) Readers and writers understand their own abilities and progress better than a stranger. Therefore, they are the best evaluators of themselves and their work. (2) Choice is the most important ingredient in a reading-writing classroom. Thus, teachers and students must make their own decisions when deciding what to place in their literacy portfolios. (3) Teachers and students must work collaboratively. Both

will create their own portfolios. Following a discussion about the Hansen lecture (1992), the training participants shared their persuasive letters and expository essays written by the target students. This assignment was used to evaluate the teachers knowledge of the five steps of the writing process (objective three).

The target teachers then practiced using a holistic scoring prompt by responding to a picture prompt. After the target teachers responded to the picture prompt, each target teacher was assigned a confidential number. The target teachers wrote this number on their prompt reaction. The practicum author then collected the target teachers' compositions and randomly distributed them to the target teachers. The target teachers were then instructed to react in writing to the composition they received. Their reactions were to include what they liked best about the composition and what areas of the composition were unclear. The practicum author then collected the compositions for a final time and during the training session break the target teachers collected their own composition.

After reading the reactions made by their peers, the target teachers discussed their feelings about their peers' critiques. They expressed astonishment with the positive comments and realized the impact this exercise had on their own confidence with writing.

The next activity required the target teachers to choose a peer partner and exchange the expository prompt reactions written by the target students from their classrooms. The peer partners holistically scored the expository prompt essays and assigned the essays with scores ranging from zero to four, the criteria used when evaluating writing using a holistic scoring method (Appendix D:62). Scores received by the target students' teacher and those scores assigned by the target teachers' peer partner were then compared. If there was a difference in the scoring, the peer partners discussed these discrepancies. The practicum author circulated among the target teachers and assisted with the scoring and comparison scores for the expository essays. This assignment was used to evaluate the target teachers' understanding of holistic scoring (objective two).

At the conclusion of this session, a review was conducted for the post-cognitive test to measure

objective three. The required assignment for the last training session was to give the target students another expository writing prompt (Appendix C:60). In order to determine if objective two was met, the target teachers were required to score the prompt and compare the score obtained on this prompt with the score received on the target students' first prompt. A record of the two scores was logged on a class list and brought to the final training session. An example of five target students' writing prompts receiving a range of scores from zero to four, the criteria used when evaluating writing using a holistic scoring method (Appendix D:62) was also brought to the final training session. This was used to determine if the target teachers appropriately assessed the target students' writing prompts. The door prize received by a target teacher at the end of this session was a thesaurus.

The twelfth week concluded the training sessions and the implementation of the practicum project. The target teachers began the training session by taking the post-cognitive test (Appendix E:65) to measure the success of objective three. In order to evaluate if the target teachers appropriately assessed the target

students' writing prompts, the target teachers shared and discussed their reactions to the zero to four scores (Appendix B:58) the target students received on the five example prompts. A discussion of the target students' comparison scores between the first and second expository prompts enabled the practicum author to measure objective two. As a culminating reward of the target teachers' efforts and accomplishments throughout the training, each training participant received a personal blank journal.

CHAPTER IV

Results

After a 12-week implementation period it was expected that the target teachers would successfully include the writing process into the integrated language arts curriculum. The practicum author provided training to the target teachers in the writing process, and demonstrated techniques to effectively incorporate the writing process into an integrated curriculum. As a result, the target students acquired the knowledge and ability to utilize the writing process and reach their potential achievement in language expression. The criteria used to measure the success of the practicum project was to meet the three objectives as measured by the specific process outlined in the following objectives.

The first outcome objective states that through the use of critical thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and graphic organizers, the target students were expected to achieve a mean score with the same

percentile in language mechanics as in language expression. In order to measure this results, a comparison was made between the target students' performance on the CTBS in the spring of 1989 and the CTBS/4 in 1992.

According to the data collected, the target students achieved a mean score of 63 percentile in language mechanics and a mean score of 62 percentile in language expression on the CTBS/4 test. Although these percentiles were lower than the percentiles obtained in 1989, the wide variance between language mechanics and language expression was narrowed to a one percentile discrepancy. The writer speculates the 1992 results were more accurate. The CTBS/4 Test Coordinator's Handbook (1990:88) states, "Scores are most reliable when they fall near the middle of the distribution of scores, that is when students get approximately 40 to 75 percent of the items correct."

The second outcome objective stated that through the use of critical thinking skills, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and graphic organizers, the target students were expected to increase their language expression. This objective was measured by a comparison

of two holistic scoring expository writing prompts similar to those developed by the Florida Department of Education (Appendices B:58 and C:60). The criteria for successful language expression was a holistic score of three or above on the writing prompt.

During the ninth week of implementation, the target teachers administered an expository writing prompt (Appendix B:58) to the target students. The expository compositions were holistically scored using the holistic scoring guide (Appendix D:62). The results indicated 17 percent obtained a score of zero, 30 percent achieved a score of one, 25 percent received a score of two, 24 percent earned a score of three, and 4 percent received a score of four. This data suggested 28 percent of the target students achieved a holistic score of three of above.

The target students continued to practice their writing skills and for the purpose of measuring their performance a second expository writing prompt (Appendix C:60) was administered to the target students. The compositions were scored holistically using the holistic scoring guide (Appendix D:62). The target students' results showed 7 percent received a score of zero, 13

percent earned a score of one, 28 percent obtained a score of two, 38 percent received a score of three, and 14 percent achieved a score of four. According to this data, 52 percent of the target students achieved a score of three or above, the criteria for successful language expression.

The third outcome objective stated one hundred percent of the fourth grade teachers should increase their knowledge of implementing the writing process through an integrated curriculum by 90 percent in order to demonstrate effective instruction of writing strategies. This objective was measured by a comparison of the target teachers' responses on a pre-and-post author constructed cognitive test (Appendix E:65). The criteria that was used to determine the target teachers' successful completion of five writing assignments was class projects applying all five of the writing steps in the integration of the curriculum.

According to the data collected, the target teachers were unable to respond correctly to all of the questions on the pretest. However, after completing the writing process training and the five writing projects, one hundred percent of the target teachers successfully

answered all of the questions with one hundred percent accuracy on the post test. In addition, one hundred percent of the target teachers successfully completed the five writing assignments. These included: writing and publishing a patterned book and a narrative story, creating and publishing a poem, composing a persuasive letter, and writing an expository essay with the target students. It was this writer's observation that one hundred percent of the target teachers successfully implemented these assignments and utilized the five steps of the writing process in an integrated curriculum.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The author of this practicum will continue to work with the target students and teachers during the next school year. In order to motivate more teachers at the practicum site and involve students at different grade levels within the integration of literature and the writing process, the writer plans to continue to assist teachers with the implementation of the writing process through demonstration lessons involving both teachers and students.

The practicum author has also assisted with the development of a summer writing workshop for elementary teachers throughout the practicum site district. During a two week period in the summer, the writer will facilitate a training for elementary teachers throughout the practicum site district. The teachers will participate in activites similar to those utilized in the practicum project.

Due to the elimination of the curriculum specialist position, the practicum author has been assigned to teach second grade for the next school year. The writer will incorporate the writing process within the integrated language arts curriculum and implement portfolio evaluation as recommended at the Hansen workshop.

The writer will continue to provide the best program possible to integrate the writing process within the elementary school curriculum. One of the most important aspects of education is the development of reading and writing skills. As today's students prepare for the future workplace, well developed reading and writing skills will enhance their opportunities to reach their potential.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

END-OF-THE-YEAR-TEACHER-SURVEY

1990 - 91

APPENDIX A

END-OF-THE-YEAR-TEACHER-SURVEY
1990 - 91

Please complete the following survey and return to the assistant principal before the last day of school.

1. Which of the following statements represent the majority of your students' reading performance at the end of the school year?

   A. At grade level.
   B. Below grade level.
   C. Above grade level.

2. In assessing students' reading comprehension, what percent of students demonstrated an understanding of the material?

   A. above 80%.
   B. between 50-79%
   C. below 50%.

3. How would you describe students' reading performance at the end of the year?

   A. Above expectation
   B. Below expectation
   C. Satisfactory
   D. Unsatisfactory

4. Which of the following methods describes spelling instruction in your classroom?

   A. Isolated rote memorization
   B. Integrated with the writing process

5. Which of the following teaching methods were predominantly used for composition instruction in your classroom (Choose as many as apply.)?

   A. As an isolated subject
   B. Integrated with the reading curriculum

C. For contest purposes only

6. Which of the following activities were offered to your students to practice their composition skills (Choose as many as apply)?

   A. Daily personal journal entries
   B. Daily writing experiences (poetry, stories, letter writing, etc.
   C. Literature response journal
   D. For contest purposes
   E. To publish individual books
   F. All of the above
   G. None of the above

7. Which of the following methods describes the use of supplemental literature in your curriculum (Choose as many as apply)?

   A. To promote vocabulary development
   B. For choral reading experiences
   C. For oral reading enjoyment
   D. For silent reading enjoyment
   E. To evaluate and compare writing styles
   F. To expand students' experiential background
   G. All of the above
   H. None of the above

8. Which of the following methods describes the way in which portfolios were used with your students (Choose as many as apply)?

   A. Storage folder for individual student's work
   B. Storage folder for student's best work samples
   C. Resource folder for parent conferences
   D. Resource for student conferences
   E. To help students evaluate and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses
   F. All of the above
   G. None of the above

9. Do you feel you have an adequate understanding of portfolio assessment?

A. Yes
B. No

10. Which of the following descriptions applies to your feelings about student portfolios (Choose as many as apply)?

A. Burdensome
B. An effective tool for student evaluation
C. An effective tool for teacher evaluation

APPENDIX B

EXPOSITORY WRITING PROMPT

Taken from:

Florida Department of Education Bureau of Program Support Services. Florida Writes. (Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation Section) Tallahassee, Florida: 1991.

Permission granted to include this prompt in this paper.

APPENDIX B

EXPOSITORY WRITING PROMPT

Everyone has job chores. These may be things people do because they are asked to do them or because it makes them feel good about themselves.

Think about one of your jobs or chores. Think about when you do it, where you do it, who you are doing it for, and how often you do it.

Now explain to the reader of your paper how you do your job or chore.

APPENDIX C

EXPOSITORY WRITING PROMPT

APPENDIX C

EXPOSITORY WRITING PROMPT

Everyone has a family. Write about who you have in your family, what makes your family different from other families, and how you have fun together.

Make it honest. Make it real life.

APPENDIX D

HOLISTIC SCORING GUIDE

Taken from:

Millett, Nancy C. Teaching the Writing Process, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.

Permission granted to include this guide in this paper.

APPENDIX D

HOLISTIC SCORING GUIDE

POSSIBLE SCORE	CRITERIA
0	Papers in this category include compositions unable to be scored, blank papers, papers commenting on the assignment ("This topic is silly"), papers that only copy or rephrase the assignment, and all illegible papers.
1	Papers in this category attempt to write about the assignment. However, they fail to do so adequately. These papers are too general, abrupt, or refer to the assignment only indirectly.
2	Papers in this category respond to the task set up in the assignment but are inconsistent and do not contain sufficient information. These papers are poorly organized and gaps and other organizational problems are evident.
3	Papers in this category generally focus on the topic and fulfill the requirements of the assignment. However, the reader may encounter some confusion from time to time, but the paper is generally well organized.

APPENDIX D

CONTINUED

POSSIBLE SCORE	CRITERIA
4	Papers that warrant this highest score are well organized, complete, and explicitly detailed. These papers include all the strengths in category three, but are presented with greater clarity and consistency. The writer's vocabulary is varied, precise, and enhances the message.

APPENDIX E

LANGUAGE ARTS COMPOSITION

PRE-AND-POST TEST

APPENDIX E

LANGUAGE ARTS COMPOSITION

PRE-AND-POST-TEST

1. Define the writing process and include the essential steps.

2. Define three styles of patterned literature.

3. Define expository, persuasive, and narrative writing.

4. Why do teachers need to integrate literature and writing?

5. What is the difference between holistic scoring and analytic scoring?

6. Why is writing important in your curriculum?

7. Why should authorship be included as part of the classroom curriculum?

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APPENDIX F

LANGUAGE ARTS COMPOSITION

AGENDA

APPENDIX F

LANGUAGE ARTS COMPOSITION

AGENDA

	ASSIGNMENT	DATE DUE	POINTS EARNED
SESSION ONE:	Publish a class patterned book.	Session Two	Five
SESSION TWO:	Publish a class narrative book.	Session Three	Five
SESSION THREE:	Compose class poem using poetry style class selects.	Session Four	Five
SESSION FOUR:	Bring student publication to share.	Session Five	Five
SESSION FIVE:	Compose: Persuasive letter Expository essay.	Session Six	Five
SESSION SIX:	Administer a holistic scoring prompt to students. Bring one example of each score (0-4).	Session Seven	Five
SESSION SEVEN:	Take Post Test		Three